



Maricopa County Animal Care & Control *Safe Toys for Dogs*



Worried that your dog gets bored when you're not around? Or are you looking to spice up interactive playtime with your dog? There are many toys available at pet supply stores that can safely fill the needs of you and your companion animal. Here are some tips to consider before you buy.

Retrieving

Most dogs love any kind of activity that involves chasing, capturing and retrieving. This stimulates their natural retrieving instincts. Balls do the job beautifully, but make sure they're not poorly made or small enough for your dog to swallow. A Frisbee or a tennis ball sewn into a sock will send your canine running, too. Toys with squeakers may appeal to a dog's hunting instincts, but it is a good idea to avoid

products with small inner parts that he could eat.

Breed-specific activities

Enrich your dog's play experience by selecting an activity based on your dog's natural inclinations - border collies, sheep dogs and corgis, for example, may delight in herding a giant boomer ball, while golden retrievers, Labrador retrievers and retriever mixes love to fetch, especially in the water. Beagle types would be happy to hunt for hidden toys or treats.

Chewing

Chewing is an all-time favorite canine pastime. It's also satisfying enough that your dog will probably spend hours doing it in your absence. It's best to make sure he chews on an appropriate toy rather than your furniture. And not only does chewing curtail

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boredom, it helps keep your dog's teeth and gums healthy and plaque-free.

Let your dog exercise his jaws to his heart's content with a hard-rubber chew toy. Some of these toys bounce erratically, which may take your canine by pleasant surprise and stimulate him to perfect the art of the chase. Some toys allow you to hide treats within. The hidden treats will come out during play to keep your dog's interest. You can also provide him with rawhide chews.

Toys and Games to Avoid

Never give your dog wooden chewables and toys. Wood can splinter into pieces that may cause ulcers and other digestive problems if swallowed. And give poultry and pork bones the boot as they, too, can splinter and cause damage to your dog's teeth and mouth. Cooked beef marrow bones are acceptable, and nylon bones are great, too.

Avoid purchasing dog pulls or

playing "tug-of-war" with your dog. This game involves you holding one end of a tug toy (often a short piece of rope) and your dog holding the other end with her mouth and tugging away from you. Tug-of-war can promote aggressive play, dominant behavior and your dog may generalize this game with objects other than the tug toy, like his leash, which isn't very cute.

Maricopa Animal Care & Control also does not recommend that you give your dog your old clothing or shoes as toys. He will probably not restrict himself to these items, but rather see your offer as an invitation to chew anything that bears your scent, including your brand new pair of shoes.